

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 870

By Parkinson

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor Reverend Harold A. Middlebrook of Knoxville.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this General Assembly should honor those individuals who have answered a divine call to the ministry and who have served with dedication, vigor, and enthusiasm to perform God's work for their congregations and their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such dedicated church leader is Reverend Harold A. Middlebrook, who serves as senior pastor at Canaan Baptist Church of Christ in Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, born in Memphis on July 4, 1942, Reverend Harold Middlebrook was an active member of the Civil Rights Movement and friend of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; he has served as an ordained minister since 1966; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Middlebrook's ministry is deeply intertwined with civil rights and human rights activism and the pursuit of justice; he realized his call to the ministry in 1960, the year civil rights student sit-ins blossomed across the South; a student at Morehouse College at the time, he joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and participated in several sit-ins in Atlanta; and

WHEREAS, it was while attending Morehouse that he met and befriended Dr. King; his association with the King family continued as Reverend Middlebrook served as the youth minister at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where both Dr. King and his father held pastorates; and

WHEREAS, when Reverend Harold Middlebrook fell ill in jail after being arrested for participating in a civil rights demonstration in Atlanta, it was Martin Luther King, Sr., who came

to his rescue, getting him out of jail and placing him in the home of his son, A.D. King, who was also a pastor; and

WHEREAS, the Kings nursed Reverend Middlebrook back to health, teaching by example the role a minister could play outside the confines of the church walls and thus inspiring him to a lifetime of devoted work in ministry; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Middlebrook pursued ordination and traveled to civil rights hot spots around the South with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a faith-based civil rights organization headed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, one of Reverend Harold Middlebrook's biggest challenges came in Selma, Alabama, where he took over responsibility for registering new voters after the Voting Rights Act was passed; he was tasked with teaching poor Blacks and whites in the area to read and write and to convince frightened people to register to vote, even when some fears were warranted; and

WHEREAS, his role in the community soon morphed into that of social worker and ally, as he aided individuals however he could among a tableau of burning crosses and sugar being poured into gas tanks; he himself was shot at and beaten; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, Reverend Middlebrook served as assistant pastor to Benjamin Hooks at Middle Baptist Church in Memphis, joining the strategy committee of the Community on the Move for Equality and playing an integral role in the Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike; he was one of the leaders who called on Dr. King to come to Memphis and support the strike and ultimately witnessed his friend's assassination from the parking lot of the Lorraine Motel; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Middlebrook attended LeMoyne-Owen College and Memphis Theological Seminary in the 1970s; he held pastorates with Greater Springfield Baptist Church in Bolivar from 1970 to 1977 and Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Knoxville beginning in 1977;

he also served as director of Christian education for the West Tennessee Central Baptist Association and as president of the Hardeman County Ministerial Association; and

WHEREAS, he remained politically active throughout the 1970s and 1980s and has fought to keep Dr. King's legacy alive through social welfare initiatives such as the Canaan Baptist Housing Corporation and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Commemoration Commission of Greater Knoxville, which he founded in 1986 and chaired until 2000; and

WHEREAS, a leader in his community beyond his duties as pastor, Reverend Harold Middlebrook has served as president of the Bolivar Human Development Corporation, an advisor to the Hardeman County Bi-Racial Commission, co-coordinator of the Hardeman County Political Action Commission, and an advisory board member to the Tennessee Public Service Commission; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, he was duly honored with the Whitney M. Young Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award at the Knoxville Area Urban League's Equal Opportunity Gala; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Middlebrook's commitment to God, his spiritual leadership, and his love for people, as demonstrated throughout his many years of activism and service, are most worthy of our respect and admiration; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we recognize and honor longtime pastor and Civil Rights activist Reverend Harold A. Middlebrook, commending his fifty-six years in ministry and extending our best wishes for much continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.